

A hero in the line of duty

Pearse awarded for brave actions

By Susanna Sheehan
Clipper Editor

Officer Dennis Pearse, the Duxbury patrolman whose quick thinking brought down a shooting suspect with nonlethal force in April, was awarded a Medal of Honor by Duxbury Police Chief Matthew Clancy on Monday.

The Medal of Honor is the highest award given by the police department. Only three other people have received this award in the 85-year history of the Duxbury Police Department. According to Clancy, it is awarded "for an outstanding act in the line of duty at imminent personal hazard of life, with full knowledge of the risk involved."

At the Board on Selectmen's meeting Monday night at Town Hall, Clancy explained the circumstances surrounding the incident on the early morning hours of Sunday, April 24 when a 25-year old Maine man went on a shooting spree in the heart of town. The first victim was a 33-year old Marshfield man who was driving past Town Hall on Tremont Street. when he was shot in the abdomen by a shotgun-wielding man in a passing car around 1:15 a.m. The victim drove himself to the fire station down the road to receive help for his injuries. He had shotgun pellets lodged on his left side and lower abdomen and back.

On duty that night, Police Officer Dennis Pearse saw a suspicious car approaching the fire station around 1:20-1:30 a.m., which did a U-turn at near-by Heritage Lane. It then pulled into the parking lot at the Holy Family Church and sped off toward Tobey Garden Street. Pearse gave chase but lost the suspect, Lucas McPherson of Mapleton, ME, until he caught up with him in a driveway on Tobey Garden Street.

In the short period of time before Pearse reached him, McPherson had shot a resident in the face and the shoulders with shotgun pellets. As McPherson was trying to get away from the area in his Chevrolet Impala, Pearse's police cruiser blocked him in the driveway while the terrified resident ran over to Pearse saying he'd just been shot. Pearse told him to get back into the house and ordered the suspect out of his car at gunpoint.

It was Pearse's actions after this point that made him worthy of the Medal of Honor, according to Clancy.

"Our investigation later revealed that the suspect had the breach of the shotgun open and was feverishly trying to reload the gun as Officer Pearse was ordering him to exit the vehicle," began Clancy, telling the story of the how the situation unfolded. "Officer Pearse had drawn his duty pistol at this point. Unable to reload the shotgun, the suspect then armed himself with a hunting knife and began to comply with the officer's commands to exit the vehicle. The suspect articulated his reply that he intended to comply, so Officer Pearse holstered his pistol but maintained coverage on the suspect with his Taser.

"Officer Pearse then gave verbal commands to the suspect, (but) the suspect then began to ignore all his verbal commands to lie down on the ground. Officer Pearse warned the suspect



Duxbury Police Officer Dennis Pearse received the Medal of Honor Monday night from Police Chief Matt Clancy.

that he would be Tased if he didn't lie down on the ground. At this point, as the suspect was about to lie on the ground, (but) suddenly he straightened up and began to advance quickly toward the officer. Officer Pearse observed a knife in the suspect's hand and immediately discharged his Taser, striking the man in the chest, dropping him to the ground. At this point Officer Gallo had arrived on the scene. The suspect again rose to his feet. Officer Pearse applied a second Taser strike, dropping the suspect to the ground. At this point, Officer Gallo moved in to secure the suspect into handcuffs."

Clancy recognized Pearse for his quick decision making that led to a safe outcome for all involved.

"Your keen awareness back at the initial crime scene led to the apprehension of a violent and dangerous individual, who, if not immediately located, would have likely have harmed more people and likely created tremendous chaos throughout the community," Clancy said. "In a chaotic, violent and rapidly evolving encounter, the use of lethal force would have likely been justified. You made split-second decisions that ultimately saved your life but also saved the life of the gunman. Your heroic, professional and selfless actions in a situation in which you were faced with life-threatening violence has brought tremendous favor to yourself and to the entire Duxbury police department."

Pearse was also honored with a citation from the Massachusetts House of Representatives for "protecting the citizens of Duxbury while using non-lethal force."

Clancy also recognized Kingston Officer Michael Gallo, who arrived on the scene to help Pearse after listening to the incident unfold on the police radio. Gallo took the initiative and was already on his way to Duxbury to see if he could assist when he was told by his supervisor to go there.

Clancy honored Gallo with a chief's citation, saying it was "in extreme appreciation of his actions" that night that warranted the award. A chief's citation is given for a "creditable act in the line of duty" and takes into account response time, initiative, persistence, excellent police work and teamwork. Clancy said that Gallo made a real difference in the situation's outcome.

"We are convinced that had Officer Gallo not responded so quickly to aid Officer Pearse, that it was highly likely that this this suspect's combative and assaultive behavior would have continued," said Clancy. "Officer Gallo was fully aware of the situation he was responding to and he did not waver. He placed himself in harm's way to come to the aid of a Duxbury police officer."

"Officer Gallo discharged his duties, professionally, without hesitation and with tactical precision," Clancy continued. "As a result, a very dangerous individual was in custody, ending a substantial threat to the public's safety."

Gallo was also awarded a citation from the Massachusetts House of Representatives for his "heroic actions" in assisting Pearse.



Kingston Police Officer Michael Gallo (left) received a chief's citation from Clancy for his assistance during an April shooting spree.